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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 9 July 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

CONCLUSION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT WITH THE PRESENTATION OF A SUMMARY BY THE PRESIDENT

The PRESIDENT said that he would now present his summary of the main features of the deliberations of the high-level segment. A broad convergence of views appeared to have emerged on several aspects of the theme "Enhancing international cooperation for development: the role of the United Nations system". The current juncture was seen as a defining moment which provided a unique opportunity for strengthening international development cooperation. It had been made clear during the high-level segment that the effectiveness of the United Nations system, which was expected to play a pivotal role in that development cooperation, needed to be enhanced. The objectives of peace, development and justice, mandated by the Charter, were seen as indivisible and equally essential. Development cooperation and the eradication of poverty were regarded as inextricably linked with the preservation of peace and security, and the view had been expressed that the two needed to be pursued with equal vigour and in an integrated manner.

Concern had been expressed about the stalled world economy and the problems of market access, technology, excessive debt burdens, inadequate official development assistance and a generally unfavourable economic environment. It had been stressed that Africa and the least developed countries faced a particularly difficult situation, while income levels in the transition economies of the East were falling sharply and recovery from recession in the developed economies was weak. A concerted effort to reinvigorate growth and development was seen as the first priority. The call had been made for an opening-up of markets through a successful outcome to the Uruguay Round, the easing of the debt burden and an increase in official development assistance, including a real increase in the resources available to the International Development Association. It had been emphasized that

(The President)

special attention must be paid to the problems of the African and least developed countries. The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 46/151, represented a commitment to faster African economic and social development.

Some concern had been expressed that the resources released as a result of the reduction in international tension might be diverted from development assistance to support the transition in Eastern Europe and newly independent States. Nevertheless, assurances had been given that resources for development assistance and support for the transition economies would be kept separate. A successful transition and restoration of growth in Eastern European and newly independent States was seen as beneficial to the world economy. Several speakers had highlighted the urgency of international support for political and economic reforms in the region.

Many delegates had referred to an emerging vision of development as human-centred, equitable, and socially and environmentally sustainable, with the eradication of poverty as the priority objective. More effective policy coordination with broad participation was seen as an important means of creating a more favourable economic environment for development. There had also been a call for international support to ensure the success of the economic reforms being pursued in many developing countries. Moreover, the need to integrate social goals into adjustment programmes and development strategies had been stressed. The proposal for a world summit for social development had received broad support. Another element that had been stressed by many speakers was the need for good governance both nationally and internationally. Democratic principles were seen as necessary to sustain both short-term adjustment and long-term development.

Speakers had noted the ongoing restructuring of the United Nations, which should continue, although care should be taken not to redefine the development priorities of developing countries or limit the scope of development cooperation to technical cooperation. The establishment of a new department to strengthen the United Nations system in the field of humanitarian assistance had been welcomed, and many delegations had expressed the view that

(The President)

the establishment of a commission on sustainable development would have an impact on the overall reform of the United Nations role in the economic and social and related fields. There was broad acceptance of the need to review the relationship between and functioning of the various parts of the United Nations system in the economic and social and related fields so as to optimize its effectiveness. The importance of better coordination of United Nations activities in those areas had also been stressed with particular reference to cross-sectoral issues. Moreover, a number of speakers had called for an increased role for the regional commissions.

Speakers had stressed that it was important to ensure adequate and assured resources for operational activities and to preserve the neutrality of United Nations programmes, duly respecting the national priorities of recipient countries. It had been proposed that operational activities should be financed through a combination of assessed, negotiated and voluntary contributions. Much attention had also been paid to the need for a closer and improved relationship between the United Nations and its agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions. The role of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) was seen as central in bringing about improved coordination.

He said that he had decided to establish an open-ended ad hoc working group of the Council on the role of the United Nations in enhancing international cooperation for development. The group would develop recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session and appropriate action. In particular, the working group would be guided by the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, the declaration adopted at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly, the Cartagena Commitment, adopted at the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the deliberations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The first meeting of the working group to discuss organizational matters would be held before the conclusion of the current session of the Council.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

(a) ASSISTANCE IN THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE GROUPS, INCLUDING ASSISTANCE DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES (E/1992/27 and 47)

The PRESIDENT declared open the coordination segment of the Council's current session.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), speaking on a point of order on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that the European Community delegations attached great importance to the coordination segment and the manner in which it was organized. The Council had earlier decided that the statements of executive heads of specialized agencies should be circulated in advance, given the importance of the matters under consideration. Regrettably, not a single statement had in fact been made available in advance. He also noted that the list of speakers for the current meeting was very long, which would scarcely help the Council to reach appropriate recommendations. He trusted that in the circumstances the President would make every effort to hold speakers to the time-limit of five minutes determined earlier.

Mr. MALONE (Canada) agreed that the Council did not have time to hear long statements, which in any event, did not foster genuine dialogue.

Mr. MOORE (United States of America) said that he fully endorsed the views stated by the representatives of the United Kingdom and Canada. The emphasis at the coordination segment should be on dialogue, and speakers should make every effort to avoid a succession of unrelated statements.

The PRESIDENT appealed to speakers to respect the five-minute time-limit in delivering their statements.

Mr. JI Chaozhu (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Development) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on policies and activities relating to assistance in the eradication of poverty and support to vulnerable groups, including assistance during the implementation of structural adjustment programmes (E/1992/47). He said that the phenomenon of poverty had not receded significantly. The central fact was that more than 1 billion people, a quarter of mankind, lived in unacceptable conditions of

(Mr. Ji Chaozhu)

deprivation, and the number was rising rather than falling. Women and children were particularly prone to poverty, especially in rural areas. The brunt of the shocks resulting from falling commodity prices and rising interest rates during the 1980s had fallen on the most vulnerable segments of society. Structural adjustment programmes had also resulted in increased poverty in the short run as social services were cut back.

Those trends had led to a major resurgence of interest in poverty eradication. The major development institutions all accorded high priority to poverty eradication in their assistance programmes, and a determined effort had been made to develop common approaches. A number of inter-agency meetings had been convened to that end, and joint activities were being carried out.

While considerable progress had been made, important gaps remained. There was, for example, no overall policy framework at the level of the system, and no system-wide mechanism for addressing the issue of poverty as a whole. Further work was needed in developing common approaches to data collection and social indicators as a basis for action. In addition, closer collaboration was needed between agencies and programmes so as to incorporate social and poverty eradication components. At the field level, much needed to be done to develop a team approach in cooperation with recipient Governments to make poverty eradication an integrated programme objective.

His trusted that the Council's deliberations would provide the necessary political guidance for the development of a coordinated response and set the stage for a major effort to reduce poverty.

Dr. NAKAJIMA (Director-General, World Health Organization) said that the striking relationship between poverty and health was important to the World Health Organization (WHO). Countries with a per capita GNP of $1,500 and above had a life expectancy at birth of 71 to 78 years and infant mortality rates of 5 to 25 per 1,000 live births; in contrast, countries with per capita GNP between $100 and $499 had a life expectancy at birth as low as 43 years, and infant mortality rates might be as high as 170 per 1,000 live births. However, through judicious use of resources and community participation, some low-income countries had achieved a life expectancy at birth of 71 years and an infant mortality rate of 21 per 1,000 live births.

(Dr. Nakajima, WHO)

A disturbing feature of development strategies was that they contributed to environmental degradation, accentuated poverty in certain vulnerable groups and led to undesirable changes in lifestyles which fostered the spread of many poverty-related diseases; likewise disturbing was the fact that capacity for survival meant adaptation to a poorer quality of life. Even in the developed countries, a growing number of people could not afford access to essential health care.

WHO had long advocated a more dynamic, human-centred approach to development. Its targets relating to the goal of health for all by the year 2000 and to primary health care had been endorsed by the General Assembly. Thus WHO had drawn the world's attention to accessibility and equity in health as a basic human right, and to the contribution health made to peace, stability and prosperity. The lessons learned, inter alia, from monitoring implementation of the Global Strategy for Health for All by the Year 2000, and from the need to face the realities of the 1990s squarely, had led WHO to intensify its direct cooperation with countries and peoples in greatest need, including the least developed countries. A country-by-country approach was used, in active partnership with the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund and other development agencies. At the same time, national authorities were urged to make a realistic appraisal of health priorities and of available and new resources. WHO was committed to making more efficient use of its own resources, and to mobilizing additional resources to meet countries' priority needs; it had also initiated dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions because of concern that health-sector disbursements in some developing countries had slowed.

The root causes of vulnerability had been focused on at the International Forum on Health, held in December 1991 in Accra, Ghana, which had shown that health and economic objectives could be pursued simultaneously. Efforts to alleviate the particular vulnerability of children and women included the joint follow-up activities of UNICEF and WHO to strengthen immunization coverage of children, and the Safe Motherhood Initiative, a multi-organization activity launched in 1987. One important successful endeavour was the control

(Dr. Nakajima, WHO)

of river blindness in the Volta River basin, in which task WHO had collaborated with the World Bank and others. With regard to the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, he looked forward to the Council's favourable reaction to the measures proposed by WHO in consultation with other organizations in the United Nations system.

Forceful implementation of a strategy focused on human beings would not only promote welfare, and better health in particular, but would enable people to be more productive. In facing the challenge of consolidating and refining efforts and maximizing the scarce resources available for development, WHO would continue to contribute its special expertise.

Mr. HANSENNE (Director-General, International Labour Office) said that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) had an explicit mandate to join in the fight against poverty. The end of the cold war provided an opportunity for a fresh look at the United Nations role in that fight; the Council's current discussion was therefore important and timely. That role was necessarily indirect and secondary, since the primary responsibility lay with Governments; where the latter had the will to carry out the necessary reforms, the United Nations system could advise and assist in strengthening national capacity. The approach should be realistic, promoting conditions in which economic and social institutions - free employers' associations and free trade unions in particular - could function effectively, and directing policies towards integrating the poor, the unemployed and the most vulnerable groups into society.

With that approach in mind, ILO was concentrating its contribution on four areas. Firstly, it assisted in the design of policies and programmes to stimulate higher economic growth levels and generate productive employment. Secondly, ILO sought to promote increased access by the poor, especially in the rural and informal sectors, to productive assets, and to enhance their participation in the economy. Thirdly, it encouraged broader social protection through the application of international labour standards, assisted in institutional and infrastructure creation or reform and advised on social security measures. Fourthly, it strongly urged that poverty alleviation should be taken into account in formulating macroeconomic policies, including

(Mr. Hansenne)

those relating to structural adjustment. In that connection, ILO welcomed the statement by the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund to the effect that it was not simply a question of providing social safety nets but rather of recognizing that the social dimension must be at the centre of development issues.

Mr. SAOUMA (Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the eradication of poverty was one of mankind's challenges on the eve of the third millenium. All countries should act together in promoting sustained economic and social development, focused on human beings. The majority of the world's poor depended on agriculture, forestry and fishing for their subsistence; agriculture, therefore, played a central role in the fight against poverty. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was carrying out a priority programme in that regard, covering aspects such as agriculture and global development, food security, the role of women in development and popular participation.

In a little over 30 years' time the world would have over 3 billion inhabitants; in order to meet their needs, production of food and other agricultural products would have to be doubled. The challenge, therefore, was to find new ways to increase agricultural productivity without depleting natural resources - for example, by developing plant and animal strains which required less land and energy, and by improving poor farmers' production methods so as to conserve resources. For the time being, however, existing techniques must be used, despite criticism about their harmful effects on the environment. Most disquieting was the lack of any sign of a firm approach to the colossal research task required in order to introduce new methods and approaches. Among the latter, biotechnology was a promising sector; but research in that field was carried out mainly by transnational corporations, which concentrated on plant and animal strains for which outlets already existed. The needs of poor countries and poor farmers, therefore, and the question of research priorities, including publicly financed research, must be considered; the Advisory Group for International Agricultural Research could play an essential role in that regard. National research efforts, too, should be given the necessary support.

(Mr. Saouma, FAO)

The resources needed for poverty eradication far exceeded the poor countries' means. In order to reduce their external indebtedness, new approaches were required, and, as a matter of the utmost urgency, official development assistance must be brought up to the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of GNP. A lasting solution, however, depended on an improved international trading system, including increased commodity prices, better terms of trade and access to the industrialized countries' markets. The United Nations had an essential role in that regard, and efforts to enhance system-wide cooperation should focus, as a matter of priority, on improving cooperation between the specialized agencies and the World Bank in the fight against poverty. It was likewise essential to coordinate the development assistance provided by bilateral aid agencies.

One specific area in which such cooperation could be strengthened was the campaign against trypanosomiasis; over 10 million square kilometres of fertile land in 37 sub-Saharan countries were affected by that disease. Although environmentally safe techniques existed to control the vectors, less than 2 per cent of the infested area had been treated, owing to lack of resources, and FAO's efforts could not succeed unless the World Bank launched an adequately funded campaign; FAO was ready to collaborate fully in that regard. Another area was the financing of activities to combat poverty under the Global Environment Facility. If programmes to protect the environment were to succeed, rural poverty must be tackled; the Facility's scope must be broadened, as a matter of urgency, for that purpose.

With regard to coordination, the existing inter-agency mechanisms must be strengthened. One of those, the ACC Task Force on Rural Development, was a valuable system-wide coordination mechanism for the task of eliminating rural poverty. The Council should reaffirm the importance of that body and encourage the strengthening of its activities. It was important that Member States strengthened the United Nations system as a whole in the common fight against poverty, which affected almost one sixth of mankind.

Mr. EDGREN (Assistant Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that human development was the primary objective of all UNDP's efforts. The real aim of poverty alleviation was to improve people's lives in

(Mr. Edgren)

terms not only of income but of health, education opportunities, leisure, and political and economic freedom - all of which called for national policies. Experience showed that programmes to alleviate poverty should follow three paths: a growth pattern conducive to equitable distribution of income and assets; well-targeted social policies; and support for local institutions and organizations, UNDP's approach was to help recipient countries build up their capacity to identify, design and implement poverty alleviation activities. It emphasized policy concerns such as relationships between macropolicy framework and poverty, access by the poor to resources, and the various social services, structures and institutions which could foster wider participation. Those policy concerns were now being shared among several agencies and bodies in the United Nations system, although greater coordination was required. The various joint activities being undertaken included efforts designed to support vulnerable groups during the implementation of structural adjustment programmes and to measure those programmes' social impact.

Four starting points, in which greater coordination would be mutually beneficial, might be considered. The first was the analysis of poverty processes. The second was the incorporation of people in development planning. The third was the exploration of ways and means to incorporate poverty alleviation concerns in the policy dialogue. The fourth was coordination in data collection and analysis, including an appraisal of the use of existing relevant data in the various agencies.

With regard to operational activities, UNDP had made significant efforts to coordinate policies and field activities with other agencies and partners in mobilizing funds and providing technical expertise and information. Recently, UNDP had participated in poverty-alleviation joint formulation missions, with its partners in the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) in a few pilot countries in Africa; similar initiatives were being taken in other countries and regions. It had also collaborated with the World Bank in the context of the Social Dimensions of Adjustment programme in Africa, and planned to expand collaboration with other agencies in the next phase of that task.

(Mr. Edgren)

UNDP would continue to foster coordination in the United Nations development system in supporting the developing countries' efforts to eradicate poverty, and to review and amend its programme policies and strategies as experience dictated.

Mr. JOLLY (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund) drew the Council's attention to the increasingly pessimistic forecasts regarding poverty, which showed an increase in virtually every region of the world. In the light of that deteriorating situation, he would like to propose the following key points for practical action. The United Nations should review its objectives and commitments for the 1990s and consider how they might be given greater priority within the framework of revitalization and restructuring of the Organization as a whole. The Council could play a critical role in stimulating that review and in monitoring progress. In that collective effort the Bretton Woods institutions must play a supportive role, which was not, unfortunately, so far reflected in activities at the country level.

In all countries where Governments requested assistance, a strategy document focusing on international support for poverty eradication should be prepared, with the cooperation of all the operational agencies of the United Nations, and under the leadership of the resident coordinator in the country concerned and in close liaison with the Government itself.

Support from the regional commissions in those efforts would also be essential. One of the features of development in recent years had been a growing differentiation in the pattern and prospects of development in various regions, and the regional commissions should play an increasing role in enabling the United Nations system to move from global perspectives to national and regional realities.

Africa and the least developed countries in other regions of the world needed to receive special attention and support, on the lines indicated by the Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

Monitoring was crucial. The United Nations Statistical Office should be in the forefront in providing guidelines and support for monitoring poverty eradication and human development world wide.

(Mr. Jolly)

The renewed focus on poverty eradication needed to be complemented and supported by an increase in and a restructuring of aid among donors. UNDP recommended that the proportion of bilateral aid going to human development should be increased to 20 per cent over the 1990s.

At the current session, the Economic and Social Council had before it an opportunity to provide governance and management oversight for a major initiative which would have a critical impact on the question of poverty: the Council's review of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children (E/1992/71) would provide an impetus for progress in that crucial effort.

Action in respect of those key points would go far towards the eradication of poverty in the 1990s, and would restore the vision and commitments embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, in addition to laying a firmer foundation for the process of peace-building.

Ms. BERTINI (Executive Director, World Food Programme) stressed the overriding need for Governments, agencies and non-governmental organizations to work together in a cooperative manner in the service of the poor. The World Food Programme (WFP) was the primary distributor of multilateral food aid in the world, but food alone could not eliminate poverty and it was therefore vital for WFP efforts to be closely coordinated with those of other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, working together with the Governments of developing countries to help them achieve the goal of self-reliance.

She agreed with the Secretary-General that sustained economic development was the appropriate solution to poverty. In the short to medium term, however, the poor needed help with food and other basic necessities, while a social safety net was necessary for the most vulnerable groups, especially female-headed households, which represented the highest proportion of poor families.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic had become a major global socio-economic problem, particularly in Africa, aggravating poverty, child dependency and the problem of orphans. Coordinated action was needed to increase the impact of

(Ms. Bertini)

individual programmes in creating awareness and providing support and treatment for those infected.

The poor had also borne the brunt of the dramatic increase in natural and man-made disasters in recent years, and she welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to enhance coordination through the establishment of a Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Emergencies currently accounted for over half of WFP operational activities, compared to one third in the past. Emergency assistance was vital but the resources used must be in addition to those necessary to support long-term development efforts to eradicate poverty. Significantly increased resources for development were therefore required.

She welcomed the Secretary-General's strong commitment to coordination in the field, as expressed in his statement to the high-level segment, and stressed that appropriate structural changes were needed to achieve such coordination. One of the major problems was the complexity of the system, where the poor had to deal with many sources of assistance, all with different rules, procedures, offices and bureaucracies. Surely development organizations sharing the same overriding goal could be brought under the same United Nations management, developing compatible programmes in concert with host Governments. Such an approach could work only through the involvement of all operational development agencies working in the field on behalf of the poor.

Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) said that nearly all economic assistance, both multilateral and bilateral, was geared to the alleviation of poverty. In many cases, the adverse effects of structural adjustment policies had been felt most keenly by the poor and a social safety net was needed. Over 600 million people were living in extreme poverty, two thirds of them in Asia, while the situation in sub-Saharan Africa was also critical. The number of women living in poverty had risen dramatically in the past 20 years, and an appropriate policy was needed to address their plight. Poverty was deeply rooted in inequality and injustice, with particular regard to income and land distribution. It was therefore vital that policies to eradicate poverty should take full account of the various economic and social factors which had created, aggravated, and sustained it, notably the inequitable allocation of

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

available resources nationally, including the level of military expenditure, and the lack of proper rural development policies. Clearly, national poverty policies were the responsibility of Governments, but, unless such policies were pursued with determination, little could be achieved through international assistance.

Turning to the report of the Secretary-General (E/1992/47), he welcomed the role played by ACC in coordinating the United Nations system through its Task Force on Rural Development, as well as the initiative by JCGP, which was collaborating to combat poverty in five selected developing countries. He also commended the work of the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational), which had invited its members to consider the need for inter-Secretariat action at headquarters level to develop common strategies. He wondered whether any steps had been taken to follow up that initiative. The report had also called for an overall system-wide anti-poverty strategy, but the steps taken so far had been rather isolated and limited in scope.

With regard to government-level coordination, the United Nations could play an important role in helping in national policy formulation by making its expertise and knowledge available, through round tables and consultative groups, so as to foster dialogue among development partners and ensure a coherent approach. Extensive dialogue between Governments and the relevant United Nations bodies was crucial in establishing a basis for improved coordination.

With regard to coordination in the field, it was at the country level that the United Nations system could have the greatest impact. It was only at the field level that dialogue with Governments could take place and programmes could be formulated to meet specific needs. In that connection, the role of the resident coordinator should be strengthened and a genuine joint programming exercise organized involving United Nations agencies and Governments.

With regard to agency coordination at headquarters level, a methodology was required in order to respond to the needs of developing countries in a coherent and effective manner. Because the issue of poverty eradication was so broad, covering health, food, water, population and education, virtually

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

every agency in the United Nations system was involved. A systematic approach was therefore required, and United Nations bodies needed to engage in intensive discussions on matters such as the collection of information, the formulation of a methodology for translating data into country-specific policies, a method of coordinating programmes and a clear division of labour.

He agreed with the report that information sharing, data collection and situation analysis were important for that purpose, but felt that there was substantial duplication of work among agencies and that greater coordination was needed to produce a country-specific approach, with more discussion at headquarters level on how data could be used and assessed to achieve that end.

There was also a need for improved coordination between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, especially the World Bank, which should make better use of the expertise and experience of bodies such as UNDP, particularly at the country level.

Mr. GARELIK (Russian Federation) said that all countries, both developing and developed, were confronted with the problem of poverty. The proposals and recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General in his report (E/1992/47) enjoyed wide support, and the delegation of the Russian Federation agreed with the conclusion that underdevelopment and population growth were interrelated issues which could be addressed only by macroeconomic policies which aimed at achieving financial stabilization without losing sight of social priorities. In that context, the end of the "cold war" could only be regarded as a welcome development. The United Nations, and the Economic and Social Council in particular, must enhance its catalytic role in development, taking into account the social factors involved in restructuring. It was essential both to dispense with redundant programmes and to make sure that available resources were used to best effect. In the context of that endeavour, his delegation particularly welcomed the proposal to convene a world summit meeting, with a clearly defined agenda, to discuss issues relating to social development.

There was clearly a need for a thoroughgoing analysis of the needs of each individual country, to which not only the regional commissions, but also international financial institutions and the specialized agencies could make

(Mr. Garelik, Russian Federation)

their contributions. It might also be timely to seek alternative, non-governmental, financing for projects.

Mr. MARKER (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/47) had revealed the grave fact that more than 1.1 billion people in the world were considered to be living in poverty. Of the world population considered to be extremely poor, two thirds lived in Asia, while in sub-Saharan Africa a population of some 120 million lived largely in areas where soils were poor and farming techniques underdeveloped. Those alarming figures underscored the need for concerted global action, for which the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade provided a broad framework.

The adverse effects of structural adjustment programmes in many developing countries, including his own, were felt particularly in the social infrastructure and services, and there was clearly a greater need for programmes to mitigate their impact. It was against that background that better coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system had acquired the utmost importance, and his delegation strongly endorsed the view that there was an imperative need to develop a coherent system-wide framework for action in the area of poverty eradication. Such a commitment would inevitably entail additional financial resources and the elimination of current inequities in the global monetary, financial and trade systems.

Mr. SERRATE-CUELLAR (Observer for Bolivia) said that the countries of the North were finally realizing that poverty was of concern to all countries, both developing and developed. The new awareness of a global dimension, evident most recently in Rio, had brought sharply into focus not only the risks to the environment and to the cultural heritage of mankind, but also the serious deterioration in living conditions, particularly in the developing countries. In that context, determining the course of cooperation could no longer be the sole preserve of those with resources, but must be a joint effort by all nations.

(Mr. Serrate-Cuéllar, Observer, Bolivia)

Bolivia, which had contributed to the formulation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, believed that it was now important to assess what progress had been made and whether the undertakings given had been met.

As the Secretary-General had indicated, there was no overall system-wide anti-poverty strategy, with the result that the most vulnerable groups were still suffering, while discussions on procedure, tactics or organization continued.

Among the most vulnerable groups were the indigenous peoples, whose welfare was of particular concern to his own country. In that connection, he stressed the importance of the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention and the work of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. In addition, in its resolution 45/164, the General Assembly had proclaimed 1993 as International Year for the World's Indigenous People, while the Governments of Latin American countries had recently agreed in Madrid to set up a fund for the development of Latin American and Caribbean indigenous peoples.

In his own country, legislation had been adopted targeting specific groups. In addition, the fifth country programme for Bolivia adopted by the UNDP Governing Council had been designated a national coordinating instrument.

Lastly, he stressed that the concept of sustainable development was a vital point of departure and, in that connection, endorsed the call for a world summit for social development to be held.

Mr. MALONE (Canada) said that a number of obstacles must be overcome if the problem of poverty was to be tackled effectively. Firstly, economic policies which impeded growth and discriminated against the poor must be abandoned; secondly, political, legal, social and racial discrimination must be eliminated; and lastly, human and financial capital constraints must be eliminated. If those objectives were to be achieved, the Governments of all countries must accept that they bore the prime responsibility for establishing a public policy to reduce poverty. Each Government would have to determine how best to pursue that goal, while ensuring that all citizens were in a position to participate in, and benefit from, the development process.

(Mr. Malone, Canada)

Government policy should focus particularly on improving basic health and education services, especially in rural areas, and on improving technology and services to small-scale producers, including women. Although Governments should be responsible for establishing the policy framework, they should allow non-governmental organizations, cooperatives and individuals to participate creatively in the process of poverty-alleviation. The private sector must be allowed and encouraged to operate at all levels, that being the sector which created employment. It should be pointed out that failure to enhance the economic role of women did much to perpetuate low rates of economic growth, poverty, ignorance, child mortality and rapid population growth. Investment in education for women would do much to enhance their long-term economic prospects, and was therefore critical for the survival of society as a whole.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that it would be useful if representatives who had spoken in the high-level segment could make their views available to delegations in summary form, in order to ensure that action-oriented recommendations could emerge from the discussions.

Mr. PAULINICH (Peru) said that he welcomed the suggestion of the representative of the United Kingdom, since there was an evident need to identify specific areas in which coordination could be improved.

Mr. AVALLE (Argentina) and Mr. MALONE (Canada) said that they also agreed with the suggestion made by the representative of the United Kingdom.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.